



The Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP
Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care

MEDIA RELEASE

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Connect, Communicate and Care to Help Save a Life

Today we're being asked to consider the difference that connection, open communication and care can make to those with mental illness, and the effect we have on each other's lives.

Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, Ken Wyatt AM, MP said World Suicide Prevention Day, and this year's theme of '*connect, communicate and care*', like RUOK? Day, highlights the importance of starting a conversation.

"Mental illness will affect 45 per cent of us at some stage of our lives," Minister Wyatt said.

"Unfortunately over 2800 Australians die from suicide each year and many others may attempt to end their own lives. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, suicide is the fifth-highest leading cause of death with their suicide death rate twice that of non-Indigenous Australians in many states.

"A suicide or attempted suicide affects not only the individuals concerned, but can also devastate their friends and families, leaving them struggling to understand why.

"Today is a reminder about the importance of communication in suicide prevention and helping connect those who are struggling with formal and informal support. While starting a conversation can be difficult, simply asking 'are you okay?' could be a life-saver."

Minister Wyatt said the Australian Government is committed to raising awareness of suicide risk, supporting those at risk of taking their own lives, and helping those affected by suicide.

"There is already a great deal of work underway in the mental health sector. Our Primary Health Networks deliver regionally-focussed services within a stepped care approach, starting with emphasis on early intervention and prevention, and using integrated services and digital technologies," Minister Wyatt said.

"The Government has renewed efforts to prevent suicide in Indigenous communities and recently we announced \$192 million over four years in additional funding to strengthen mental health care in Australia.

"This includes funding for eight suicide prevention trial sites, in addition to four Primary Health Network suicide prevention lead sites, to bring together the best evidence based strategies, models and technologies that will better target people at risk of suicide and support a more integrated care approach.

"We've also committed to a new Suicide Prevention Research Fund so we can drive research and build the evidence base to better understand what works."

Further details about World Suicide Prevention Day and associated community events can be found at www.wspd.org.au

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